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The Manchester Journal.

MANCHESTER, VT., TUESDAY MORNING, JANUARY 21, 1868.

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Tom Jones's Trials.

In the year 18—, I made my first voyage to Calcutta, in the good ship Clara. In her I had invested the hard earnings of years; indeed all the hard earnings of years except a small annuity to my wife in case I should never return; but my hopes were to double the amount of my investment in a single voyage. My hopes were blasted. After a short voyage we came to anchor in the Hooghly, and during a severe gale, the ship parted her cable and running about the British brig Nancy, stove a hole in her bows. The crew was that the ship and three of her crew were swallowed up in the deep sea. Fortunately, I went ashore before night to visit the consignor, who, not being at home, I waited for him until it was too late to go aboard the ship. Thus a special providence watched over me, while other poor fellows found watery graves.

Well, here I was a stranger in a strange land and penniless. At first grief overpowered me, and I wished I had shared the fate of my ship. But calling into exercise my indomitable will, I resolved to surmount my trials. The consignor being in want of a secretary, I at once entered his service. My expenses were trifling and wages good. In a few months I had accumulated quite a little fund. With this I began a system of careful speculations, and being flattered by success I plunged into all manner of business transactions, and strange to say was successful in all. Indeed, some fortune seemed to be making amends for my former ill-luck; but alas, she could not restore the dead, and although she might shower perpetual blessings on my head, widow's and orphan's tears would far outweigh her gifts.

I had passed nearly eight years under Indian skies, and having amassed enough of this world's goods I resolved to return to America. I should add that in these long years I had received no tidings from home. I sent letter after letter to my wife, and waited in vain for answers. Sometimes I feared she might be dead, and the thought made me miserable indeed. But I realized the fact that I had a living to obtain, and that I could make a fortune in Calcutta in half the time I could at home—and stayed year after year, beguiled, as many others have been by prospects of speedy competency.

After setting up my affairs I had not long to wait for an opportunity to sail for home. I took passage in the ship Nepenthe, bound for Boston, and in due time arrived at our desired haven. I did not go in going to Salem, my former home, where I expected to find my wife. Imagine my disappointment, on being told by strangers, who occupied the house I had lived in, that no such woman as Mrs. Thomas Jones lived in Salem. I sent to the house of our former pastor, hoping he would be able to give me the desired information, but learned that the good man had been dead six years. Then I thought of Mrs. Ashton, my wife's sister, who lived in Pelham, and thither I went as fast as steam could carry me. I hoped my troubles at an end when I saw old Elijah, Mrs. Ashton's gardener. Of him I learned that Mr. Ashton was dead, the place sold, and his widow was living in New York. I then asked if he had seen Mrs. Jones there previous to her removal. He said she spent a winter there six or seven years ago and was in deep mourning for her husband who had been lost at sea. When I made myself known, the old man looked on me as one risen from the dead. He said his son had seen my monument in the old burying ground at Ashley, erected by my wife. Hearing this I was more impatient than ever.

In the morning I took the first train for Ashley, the birth place of my wife, and where she would most likely retire in her supposed widowhood. It was noon when I arrived at the depot, and on inquiry found that Mrs. Thomas Jones was living at the Mason place—the old homestead. Thither I went and as I lifted the huge trunk knocker it seemed as if every pane in the old door trembled. So sure was I that my own dear wife would be the first to greet me that I came near embracing the buxom Irish girl who appeared at the door. My excitement somewhat abated when I was told that Mrs. Jones had gone away for the day. I told the girl that I was a relative of Mrs. Jones, and would wait for her.

I was ushered into the old family sitting room, where I had spent some of the happiest hours of my life. There were many familiar objects in the room. On the wall hung my portrait, and beside me that of my wife. Even my easy chair sat in the corner, looking as well as when I left it eight years before. There were a few objects which I could not understand—children, toys, a little whip a toy cart and a suspicious looking little frock hung upon a chair as if just taken off. As I was revolving in a thousand impossibilities in my mind, a pretty boy came in. He was somewhat taken aback when he saw the room occupied, but I soon restored him to his senses by letting him fumble my watch seals. As soon as he had become familiar, I asked him his name. Imagine my consternation when he answered:—“Tommy Jones, sir.”

“Tommy Jones?” exclaimed I.—“Who are you named for?”

“My papa, sir. He's gone to sea and never will be home,” “cause I was borned after he went away.”

“How old are you, boy?” said I.

“Free last June,” said the child in his baby dialect.

“You are more, sir, you are eight,” said I.

“No Tommy's only free,” was his answer.

Here was indeed a mystery. A boy bearing my name and purporting to be mine whose age is but three. Then a sudden thought struck me. The child might have been adopted by my wife; he very probably was, but to be sure I asked the Irish girl how long she had lived in Mrs. Jones's family; she answered, “going on four years.”

“And did you live here when Tommy was born?” I asked.

“Indeed I did—and didn't I pray to the blessed virgin to protect the father of him on the briny deep?”

I thrust the child from me, and exorcised myself by saying I would go and meet Mrs. Jones.

I left the house in a perfect frenzy, not knowing where I was going. I wandered on, and at last looking up, found myself in close proximity to the graveyard, and curiosity prompted me to enter and take one look at my monument, and then leave my native land forever, without letting my wife know of my existence.

Had she married again I could have forgiven her, but such perfidy I could not forgive. My heart seemed frozen within me, and I cursed the fate that had preserved me through so many trials.

Casting my eye about, I saw a broken shaft, and approaching nearer I perceived a female dressed in deep mourning, plucking flowers, and so absorbed was she that I approached unobserved and read my own epitaph. I was about moving away when I was seen.

O heavens! here was my wife standing before me. She did not recognize me, I was so changed.

“You lavish great care on these fading flowers, Madam,” said I, “but have evidently neglected to cherish the most beautiful and enduring.”

“You speak ambiguously, sir. This memorial I have erected to the memory of my own dear husband who was lost at sea, as you may read.”

“And you still believe him dead?” Does the thought never occur to you that the sea sometimes gives up its dead, Madam?”

“O, sir, I have lived in hope many years, but it has all died out of my heart now. I shall never see him again until the great judgment day.” And she wept!

“Would it be to much joy to know that he still lives?”

“I fear my joy would be more than I could bear. Sir, don't hold out any false hopes—my poor heart cannot bear much more grief.”

Could I longer doubt her sincerity? “Mary! Mary, my own dear faithful wife,” I said, repeating the words slowly